

**Prepared Remarks of United States Attorney Preet Bharara
M-Cello Press Conference
July 28, 2015**

Good afternoon. My name is Preet Bharara, and I am the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York.

In too many of our communities, heroin is back – with a vengeance – but so are we. That’s why we are here today, to announce the unsealing of nine federal indictments charging thirty-four defendants with participating in a variety of narcotics and firearms offenses in Sullivan County, New York, and in particular, in Monticello.

Several of the indictments charge major drug distribution conspiracies, including conspiracies to distribute large quantities of crack cocaine and heroin. Many of the defendants are charged with firearms offenses as well: Some are convicted felons, who are prohibited under federal law from carrying guns, and some are charged with using their guns to protect their drugs and their drug money.

With the federal charges brought today we seek to neutralize at least four different drug rings that have been operating for years – based in Monticello, but extending their tentacles outward to large parts of Sullivan County.

- Frederick Gang and his crew allegedly have been flooding Sullivan County with crack cocaine going as far back as 2007.
- Darcy Copeland and his crew allegedly have been selling kilogram quantities of heroin since at least 2011, sometimes taking guns as payment for drugs and continuing their drug distribution operations even after Copeland got locked up on state charges in July 2014.
- Another crew – led at various times by Darnell Sanders, Errol Davis and Jahmal McIntosh – has allegedly distributed massive quantities of both crack and heroin since at least 2012.
- Finally, another sprawling web of alleged heroin dealers – supplied by Harmeen Nix, Damon Mitchell, Sr., and Ramon Nunez – having been operating throughout Monticello and the rest of Sullivan County continuously for years.

The arrests today – directed at all of these networks – are the product of remarkable cooperation among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. I want to thank and am joined by Sullivan County District Attorney Jim Farrell, FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Diego Rodriguez, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations Raymond Parmer Jr., Commander Jamie Kaminski of the New York State Police, Sullivan County Sheriff Michael Schiff, and Village of Monticello Police Chief Robert Mir.

I want to recognize in particular District Attorney Farrell, whose office is announcing a number of related charges and arrests today. For a case like this, where we are trying to help local communities, we simply cannot succeed without the help of the local district attorney's office. From the beginning, District Attorney Farrell has been our partner. We are very grateful for his assistance.

I also want to commend the outstanding work of the career prosecutors on this case: Assistant United States Attorneys Michael Gerber, Max Nicholas, Won Shin, and Jennifer Beidel, supervised by Mimi Rocah and Perry Carbone, the Co-Chiefs of the White Plains Division.

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This investigation began over a year ago, when a group of agents—from the FBI, the state police, the sheriff's office, and the Monticello police department—came to us and said, if we work together, if we combine the resources and expertise of our office and the FBI, with the on-the-ground knowledge and experience of state and local law enforcement, we can really make a difference in Sullivan County. We can identify major criminal organizations there that are flooding the streets with crack and heroin and running around with illegal guns.

That is what this investigation – what these prosecutions – are all about: getting drugs and illegal guns off the streets and making a difference in Monticello and in Sullivan County.

We often talk about the harm caused by drugs, but sometimes it is difficult to appreciate the damage wrought, particularly by heroin, in rural areas like Sullivan County. We have seen a significant increase in heroin use throughout the District. We are seeing more overdoses, and tragically, fatal overdoses. As I've said before, there has been a 110% increase in heroin seizures in the New York area since 2009. These levels are higher than in any year since 1991. Last year, heroin deaths outpaced homicides in New York City.

Let me give you a sense of the significance of the heroin charges brought today for the communities affected by them. To put it in perspective, Monticello has around 6,700 residents. New York City has about 8.4 million residents. On a per-capita basis, selling just one kilogram – or 1,000 grams – of heroin in Monticello, is the equivalent of dumping over 1,200 kilograms – or 1.2 million grams – of heroin in New York City. What that tells you is that the types of drug crimes charged today, operating in more sparsely populated areas, can have a devastating impact on the community. The defendants who sold these drugs were profiting from that devastation.

One coroner reportedly estimates that 25% of all deaths in Sullivan County are drug-related. So this is not the end of our investigation. We are just getting started. We have more cases in the pipeline. Our message to the people of Sullivan County is this: There will continue to be a sustained federal presence in the county. Day in and day out, we are working to keep your streets safe and drug free. Thank you.